

Sunday, November 26, 2006.

Michigan House of Representatives
Family and Children Services Committee
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

RE: Written testimony in favor of House Bill 5267, The Equal Parenting Bill.

Dear Representative:

My name is Phillip Wurm, and I have been divorced from my ex-wife Pam Wurm for over three years now. We have two daughters, Brittany, age seven, and Megan, age five. I want to tell you how damaging the current family law system is to children of divorce, and how desperately important the passage of HB 5267 is. This legislation needs to be passed immediately, ladies and gentlemen!

The Michigan family law court system shows neither compassion or respect for a family destroyed by divorce. Children have the right to the love, care, guidance and support of both parents, if both are fit, willing and able to care for their child(ren), whether the parents are married, separated, or divorced. Following is just a small part of how my children have been adversely affected by this system, with some background information so you can see how glaring the problem is, and take action to change it!!

The Michigan Friend of the Court (FOC) is a worthless piece of bureaucracy. At our first conciliation meeting, Barry County FOC conciliator Cheryl Drumm's first question to me was: "Mr. Wurm, how much money do you make?" I replied to her that she had information to gather and an investigation to do before making any decisions. She replied: "That doesn't matter, how much money do you make?" During the course of our meeting, whenever I would try to talk of facts and "my side" of the issues, she would cut me off and explain "That's very annoying." I have since filed nearly two dozen written grievances against the FOC; only one has received a partial acknowledgement. The others have been ignored and answered with a complete denial of any problem, or with excuses that are never explained. The Barry County FOC does not give a rip about my children or their "best interests". They are only a money collection agency. I have had to deal with "artificially created" arrearages as well. Those have been invented by the FOC staff, and the outcome of the grievances on those are still pending.

My ex-wife is not a fit or able parent in many regards. Unfortunately, this did not show itself to be a serious problem until after Megan's birth. When not at work, I was our children's primary care-giver. Pam would do little if anything around the house. I found myself working a full-time job and taking care of two young daughters full-time and dealing with an increasingly unwilling and incompetent spouse and mother of my children. To briefly summarize, Pam has very severe emotional and mental problems. She is emotionally disabled and suffers from depression. She was very good at hiding her real self and covering with excuses during our short five year marriage.

At the time of our child custody "hearing" which was nothing other than a sham and a complete insult of justice itself, Pam admitted that she had been hospitalized in a psychiatric ward on three different occasions on a suicide watch. All three happened before she and I had even met, and I knew nothing of this. Circuit Court Judge James Fisher did not seem to even care about her admittal at all. Combined with false allegations of domestic violence against me, the evidence of which she presented actually proved her to be lying, and other falsities and hearsay, the judge awarded Pam physical custody, and "joint legal custody" to both of us. Joint legal custody is a waste of words. She will not abide by the court order on this, nor will the FOC enforce even one shred of the court order(s) on that subject. Fathers, myself included, are treated worse than a criminal in such a "hearing". The outcome, as in a FOC conciliation, has already been decided, and it does not matter who says what. You all know full well that a "non-custodial child support paying parent" must be created to fund the system.

Since the custody hearing, my daughters have suffered. Brittany was torn out of a preschool by her mother, just because I had become involved as a volunteer just a few weeks into the school year. She has repeated Kindergarten, and is now finally in first grade. She is having a better year now, because I fought my way through the system without an attorney present and increased my time with my children. It took four months, three motions and two hearings to succeed, fighting the system all the time. Megan never went to a preschool, and is in a "young fives" class, a developmental kindergarten program, and is very far behind. My daughters' mother rarely if ever worked with our daughters on school preparation, and my girls are paying for it now, and will for a long time. During the first hearing to increase my "parenting time" the Court Referee lectured me for not being involved with my daughter's education. The very reason for the hearing was to change the hours and increase the time my girls and I have together so I could help them. I am a college graduate, with three associate degrees, whereas my ex- is only a high school graduate.

My ex-wife was raised in a very abusive and dysfunctional home. She was molested by family members as a child. The same person or persons also have access to my daughters. The FOC and court do not care. My ex-wife and her siblings were used as a source of money for their family-her mom had them on every government program and hand-out that she could get for them. My children are being used the same way. I do not believe that if Pam was not "earning a living" off of our children that she would even care to have them with her. She was an unfit and incompetent spouse, and is the same as a mother. My daughters both average about fifteen trips yearly to our local hospital's emergency room, and about thirty trips yearly to a physician. My ex-wife has her own demons to deal with. She has not and never will be an able parent. She will never be emotionally available to our daughters. I know she intends to drag them down with her. That is no way for any child to be raised, much less my two daughters!

I hope that you now have a better idea of why House Bill 5267 needs to be passed efficiently and rapidly through your committee and through the rest of the procedure and be signed into Michigan law. I cannot understand why all of you have elected to delay and ignore this legislation for over thirteen months. For those of you on the Family and Children Services Com-

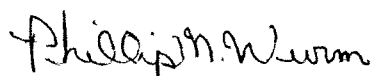
mittee, I have personally sent you many letters and much information as to the facts involving the necessity of The Equal Parenting Bill becoming a reality as soon as possible. To delay, as has been done, has allowed thousands more of Michigan's children to be dragged into a system that cares nothing for them, but only to bring in money. You know the facts as well as I do. I am a loving, caring, fit and able father. I want my children home with me, where they should be. This would be "in their best interests" as the system likes to claim is why they take the actions they do. They should be stating their actions are "in the best interests of the state, bureaucrats and lawyers", since those are the only ones the system is serving.

Opposition to HB 5267 claims that most men and fathers are abusive. Let me tell you this-domestic violence is gender-neutral. It happens to men as well. I know. My ex-spouse was physically and emotionally abusive to me in our marriage, and is abusive to our daughters. Child protective services does not care to see or hear the facts, and no one wants to hear of a husband and father who was abused by a spouse. When Pam left our marriage in late July of 2003, she fled with our daughters to a domestic violence shelter with claims of abuse against me. Nothing but lies and false accusations, as she could not prove what did not happen. She took many of her things but very little for our daughters, who were four and nineteen months of age at that time. She was rewarded with a hiding place and an attorney, and my daughters and I had no contact for nearly a month, despite my pleas as to their whereabouts and safety. The system knew where they were, and would tell me nothing. My daughters were torn from the only real home they will ever know, against their will.

Finally, divorce means divorce, the end of a marriage. After a divorce, it is each adult's responsibility to earn themselves a living, and to support their children. Those who cannot or will not hold a job and do all else that is necessary for their children should not be rewarded. Those parents are not fit, willing and able to be a parent, and cannot be entrusted with a child or children when a completely fit, willing and able parent is fighting for his or her children, and for their constitutional rights as a parent. No one bothers a married couple with children without a finding of abuse, harm or neglect. Why then, when a couple divorces, does the family law system jump in where they are not needed or wanted, without any such findings, and make decisions involving children's lives when they have no business doing so? Parents do not divorce their children, they divorce an unfit, unwilling and cheating spouse, as I did.

Will you finally now do the right thing for my daughters and the thousands of other children who are being denied a loving, caring, fit and able parent just so the biased Michigan family law court system can try to justify its existence and bring in money to fund the same system? Pass House Bill 5267-The Equal Parenting Bill now!!!

Sincerely,



Phillip N. Wurm
2988 West Airport Road
Hastings, MI 49058
(269)948-9287